REMARKS

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 112

The Examiner has rejected claims 32 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicant regards as the invention.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 102

The Examiner has rejected claim 32 under 35 U.S.C. §_102(b) as being anticipated by EP 0905747. The Examiner has rejected claim 32 under U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Mertens et al. (US Patent 6,491,764).

It is Applicant's understanding that Mertens et al. (6,491,764) fails teach Applicant's invention as claimed in claim 32. It is to be appreciated that EP 0905747 appears to be the EP version (claims priority to) of the US Patent to Mertens et al. In claim 32, Applicant teaches and claims a method of cleaning a wafer. Applicant's claimed method includes spinning a wafer, and then exposing the spinning wafer to an etchant or cleaning chemicals so as to cover the wafer with the etchant or cleaning chemicals. After exposing the spinning wafer to etchants and cleaning chemicals and before dispensing Di water onto the wafer, Applicants claim to expose the wafer ***"to a liquid or vapor having a lower surface tension than water"***. That is, Applicants teach to first expose a wafer to cleaning chemicals, after exposing the wafer to cleaning chemicals, exposing it to a liquid or vapor having a low surface tension than water and then dispensing Di water on the wafer to rinse the wafer. Applicant does not understand Mertens et al. to describe first cleaning or etching a

wafer with a solution and then exposing the wafer to a liquid or vapor having a lower surface tension than water and then rinsing the wafer with Di water.

It is Applicant's understanding that Mertens et al. describe a method and apparatus for removing a liquid from a wafer. It is Applicant's understanding that Mertens et al. describe to simultaneously flow both a liquid and a gaseous solution (e.g. a vapor of a surface tension reducing substance such as IPA) onto a wafer. For example, Mertens et al. states that there are "*several implementations possible to apply both the liquid and the vapor of the surface tension reducing substance on at least one surface of at least one substrate*" (emphasis added) (Col. 7, lines 44-46). Additionally, Mertens also states "further according to the method of the present invention, first the liquid can be applied on the surface of the substrate at or very close to the center of the rotary movement, while substantially simultaneously the gaseous substance is supplied adjacent to the liquid supply" (emphasis added) (Col. 8, line 17-21). It is Applicant's understanding that Mertens et al. clearly describes providing the vapor or liquid of the surface reducing solution while providing the liquid for the applied wet process and not after as claimed by Applicant. Additionally, Mertens et al. fails to teach Applicant's specific process where a wafer is first exposed to a chemical solution and after exposing the wafer to the chemical solution, exposing the wafer to a liquid or vapor having a lower surface tension than water, and then rinsing the wafer in water.

As such, it is Applicant's understanding that the cited references clearly fail to teach or render obvious Applicant's invention as claimed in claims 32. Applicant, therefore, respectfully requests the removal of the 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) rejections of claim 32 and seeks an early allowance of this claim.

Pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.136(a)(3), applicant(s) hereby request and authorize the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office to (1) treat any concurrent or future reply that requires a petition for extension of time as incorporating a petition for extension of time for the appropriate length of time and (2) charge all required fees, including extension of time fees and fees under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 and 1.17, to Deposit Account No. 02-2666.

Respectfully submitted,

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